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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KUALA LUMPUR 000342

SIPDIS

FOR EAP, EAP/MTS AND INR

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [KDEM](#) [MY](#)
SUBJECT: PANDEMONIUM IN PERAK STATE ASSEMBLY

REF: A. KUALA LUMPUR 337 -- ARRESTS PRECEDE MAY 7 PERAK
ASSEMBLY

[1](#)B. KUALA LUMPUR 78 -- NAJIB LEADS PERAK TAKEOVER

Classified By: Political Counselor Mark D. Clark for reasons 1.4 b and d.

Summary and Comment

[1](#)1. (C) Following a riotous state assembly session in the Perak state capital of Ipoh on May 7, which featured police physically removing the speaker from the Peoples Alliance (PR) coalition, the ruling National Front (BN) coalition of Prime Minister Najib Razak succeeded in electing a new assembly speaker from BN. Outside the halls, police detained some 64 persons, including elected opposition officials; police later released many of those detained. PR and its supporters in the state will continue to challenge the legitimacy of the BN-led government in Perak, and a number of court cases remain pending related to the takeover. PM Najib and BN succeeded in taking an important and near-final step to cement their control of Perak. However, PR's refusal to concede and the resulting police actions of May 7 may prove costly to Najib and BN's reputation and increase public skepticism over prospects for political reform. End Summary and Comment.

Pandemonium in the Chambers

[1](#)2. (SBU) The Perak state assembly held an official gathering on May 7, the first time this legislature has met since the National Front (BN) coalition successfully orchestrated a political takeover of the state on February 5 (ref B). (Comment: The BN was adamant in holding the session before May 13, otherwise the state's constitution could require the dissolution of the assembly and new elections, which BN has sought to avoid given prospects for BN's defeat. End Comment.) The police made several arrests of key opposition organizers in the two days prior to the assembly session (ref A). Police in Ipoh also warned people without any official business to avoid the state assembly building area and not participate in illegal gatherings. Under heavy police presence, all elected members of the state assembly convened in the assembly hall on the morning of May 7, and proceedings immediately descended into chaos. Over a period of hours, the BN and the PR each attempted to subvert the other by presenting their own Chief Minister and their own Assembly Speaker, resulting in pandemonium as each side attempted to set the agenda and pass motions without the participation of the other side, all the while tussling over microphones and the speaker's chair.

Police Drag Away PR Speaker

¶3. (SBU) The stalemate only ended when police entered the assembly chamber and dragged away PR Speaker S. Sivakumar, who had refused to leave the Speaker's seat prior to the entrance of the Perak Regent (the son of Perak's Sultan). With the BN in physical control of the proceedings, the Regent gave his royal address without further incident, cementing the BN's hold on the state until the court cases dealing with various issues are complete. (Comment: It is unprecedented for Malaysian police to enter chambers of any federal or state legislative body, moreover to physically remove one of its members. End Comment.)

¶4. (SBU) Outside the assembly building, police detained some 64 PR supporters, including five Members of Parliament and five state representatives from outside Perak. By late afternoon, police had released most of those detained. Tian Chua, senior official in the opposition Peoples Justice Party, was among those detained and still held by police as of 1830 local time.

BN Silent, Opposition Vocal

¶5. (SBU) PM Najib, senior leaders of his United Malays National Organization (UMNO) party, and BN leaders remained publicly silent on May 7 regarding the events in Perak, while opposition leaders predictably condemned the events. Wan Azizah Wan Ismail, PKR president and wife of opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim, stated that the police action showed clear political bias. Azizah stated "the use of the courts and the police to meddle in the affairs of the legislature is

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a blatant breach of the doctrine of separation of powers recognized by every democratic government." Lim Kit Siang of the opposition Democratic Action Party (DAP) said the day's police actions had severely damaged PM Najib and his new "1Malaysia" political slogan. The Malaysian Bar Council, in a press release, criticized the use of the police, described Perak's May 7 drama as a "bleak day for democracy," and urged new elections in the state.

KEITH